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Ex-agent: CIA acts are threat

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For the Camera

The CIA's covert actions in foreign countries threaten liberties at home, former CIA agent Ralph McGehee told an audience Monday night at the University of Colorado.

"I don't think we can allow the CIA to overturn the liberties of foreign governments and expect them to last at home," McGehee told a crowd of about 250 people in the Glenn Miller Ballroom.

He said that he could not see how an American agency could support the policies of a brutal dictatorship.

McGehee also blasted Reagan administration efforts to fund the Contras in Nicaragua, saying the situation is parallel to early U.S. funding of war efforts in Vietnam.

In general, he said, some CIA activities can have harmful effects on freedoms in the U.S.

"Why do we overturn our own ideals of life, liberty and justice?" he asked. "This is what the agency does. It is little more than a covert organization."

McGehee, a CIA agent for 25 years who currently is on a lecture tour, said he did not always see the agency as he does now.

"In my first 15 or 16 years, I thought the CIA was a missionary organization out to save the world for democracy," he said. "All of that changed when I was in Vietnam."

He said the CIA created an international anti-Communist ideology through the media during the Vietnam conflict.

"There were 350 reporters in the U.S. working for the CIA at the time," he said. "They were part of what they called the mighty Wurlitzer. It was an organ on which they could play any propaganda tune in the media."

This is when he started to protest the agency's activities from within.

He claimed that protest efforts were an effective way to change CIA activities.

"The only reason we got out of Vietnam was because of student protest," McGehee said.